

A Midsummer Dream of Japan

A Series of Concerts by Kobe College Music Dept. Graduates in June of 2010



A Whirlwind Tour

At the beginning:

KCCJEE board member Ed Grant was having a luncheon meeting with the Consul General of Japan, Mr. George Hisaeda. CG Hisaeda, remembering the Kobe College Musicians "G-7" event from 2008, told Ed that he had the Fullerton Hall at the Art Institute of Chicago reserved for the evening of June 24th to present Japanese music under the heading "A Midsummer Dream of Japan", and would like to invite musicians from the Kobe College Music Department. This was on March 31, 2010. Ed received a unanimous endorsement from the Executive Committee of KCC-JEE, and wrote on the same day to Chancellor Mori of Kobe College, who had just begun his term as chancellor and chair of the Board of Trustees on April 1. Dr. Mori's positive reply came back immediately. That is how it all began.

Planning and preparation:

The entire preparation had to be completed in 72 days. KCC-JEE established a Working Group of Tak Ishida, Go Sugiura and Natsuko Furuya to undertake this task on this side of the Pacific. Ms. Naomi Takeshita, Manager of the Music Dept., played a pivotal role in Japan. The Consul General of Japan at Chicago worked with both KCC-JEE and Kobe College all the way. The KCC-JEE Working Group had a tall order - as there was no allocation for this event in our budget, all probable expenses must be covered, so that KCC-JEE would not incur any charges. At the beginning, Dr. Mori and President Doffing decided that each organization would cover one-half of the total airfare for the three musicians. This meant that approximately US\$2,000 had to be raised by special donations. The task list seemed daunting, but KC, KCC-JEE and the Consulate General's Office rose to the challenge. KCC-JEE raised funds, organized all aspects of the Minnesota concert, purchased the air tickets, organized accommodation and transportation arrangements and coordinated communications every step of the way.

MINNESOTA: June 19 (Saturday) through June 22 (Tuesday)

Saori, Kaoru and Mai arrived safely on **Saturday** evening June 19th. After 22 hours of flying, changing planes in Tokyo and in San Francisco, the three young KC musicians looked fresh, smiling and shining with excitement. Sue Doffing and Tak Ishida met them at the Airport. Saori and Kaoru went to Tak's home for a quick supper and a good night rest, and Mai did the same at Sue's home.

On **Sunday** morning, Tak took all three for a walking tour of the campus of St. Catherine's University, then to a practice session at the home of the musicians Shin'ichi and Eri Furuya. Sunday afternoon was a "Japanese experience at the home of Tak and Noriko in Woodbury, MN". The three musicians strolled in their Japanese garden, viewed Tak's "Bonsai", and had a beautiful Japanese dinner prepared by both Noriko and Tak.



Monday was the day of **Concert #1**.

The Concert began at 7:30 pm in the Recital Hall of St. Catherine's University. The opening remarks were given by two sisters of the Order of St. Joseph. The program included Rachmaninoff, Mozart and Verdi, as well as Hisato Osawa's "Sakura-no-koe". The three women's magnificent performance captured the hearts of the audience, and every one of the 75+ audience enjoyed the performance thoroughly. Mr. William Strange, the both former and present Honorary Consul General of Japan at Minneapolis, Dr. Mirja Hansen, and our own David Therkelsen (whose daughter is a graduate of St. Catherine's University) were among the audience. Sue Doffing gave the closing remarks at the successful conclusion of Concert #1.

After the concert, a wonderful reception was held with Japanese sweets and treats.

Tuesday June 22

Saori, Kaoru and Mai said goodbye to Sue's family, Tak and Noriko Ishida, and to Minnesota. There was no time for them to go to the Mall of America for shopping, but all three promised to return.

CHICAGO: June 22 through June 26 (Saturday)

The second city on this concert tour was Chicago, where Saori, Kaoru and Mai gave two concerts.

Shortly after 12:00 noon on **June 22nd**, the three musicians were met by Go Sugiura at O'Hare Airport. He took them to the Sugiura's, where they would be staying for the next four days. The afternoon was dedicated to final adjustments and practice for the coming two concerts on Wednesday and Thursday. The three musicians practiced earnestly on Kay's well-tuned grand piano, and fuelled up for the concert with Kay's delicious cooking.

Wednesday June 23 was the day for the **Salon Concert** (Concert #2) at the official residence of the Consul General of Japan at Chicago.

In the morning, Saori, Kaoru and Mai went with Kay to the home of their "Sen-pai", Mieko and Yuko Nasu. The three musicians were very impressed by Mieko and Yuko Nasu, who once went to the same church as the Composer Hisato Osawa. Saori, Kaoru and Mai performed Osawa's "Sakura-no-koe" for the Nasu sisters. Their ages are nearly 70 years apart, and yet their love of music and their beautiful memories of the Kobe College Music Dept. were the same.

Vice Consul Yukiko Menda had arranged all the details at the official residence – including providing music stands, practice times, and a location to change and practice before the concert. It is all these details that make the perfect setup. Prior to these concerts, many KC and KCC-JEE members had worked hard to prepare a concise history of Kobe College, the Kobe College Music Department and Kobe College Corporation - Japan Education Exchange in both English and Japanese, and these histories were printed by the Consul General of Japan for distribution to the distinguished financial, corporate and local dignitaries who had assembled for the Salon Concert. Kay wrote that despite the strong wind and rain on that day, nearly 50 guests assembled to listen to Saori, Kaoru and Mai's magnificent performance.

After the Salon Concert, Consul General and Mrs. Hisaeda held a wonderful dinner party for the KC musicians. The exciting week was flying by quickly, and tomorrow would be the final, big concert.

Thursday June 24 was the day of Concert #3 at the Fullerton Auditorium of the **Art Institute of Chicago**.

The Consul General of Japan at Chicago opened the *Midsummer Dream of Japan* concert with acknowledgements and appreciation to the Kobe College Music Department (which had impressed him so much in 2008), to Ed Grant for his leadership in the Japan America Society of Chicago, and to the KCC-JEE Board, for creating this opportunity. He noted that the beautiful collaboration between KCC-JEE and Kobe College, who had responded to Consul General's invitation so willingly, had contributed towards bringing the people of the U.S. and Japan together through the beautiful music to be performed by the young Japanese musicians.

The program included elegant pieces by Chopin, Rachmaninoff, Taffanel, and Verdi. Osawa's "Sakura-no-koe" and Toson Shimazaki's poem "Yashi-no-mi", which was arranged by Toraji

Onaka, charmed the audience. The romantic melody of "Yashi-no-mi", which was composed in 1936, is remembered fondly by many Japanese.

Saori, Kaoru and Mai's performance was simply magnificent. The audience responded by standing ovations. Among the audience were Mieko and Yuko Nasu (Yuki Ohigashi, a KC graduate and Kay's good friend, drove the sisters from Skokie to the Art Institute of Chicago), Margaret Larson, whose husband David was once the Dean of the KC Music Dept. as well as the President of KCCJEE, Ed, Marjorie, Fumiyo and Kay. It was a beautiful finale leaving wonderful melodies and warm friendship in all our hearts.



Friday June 25 -- Having completed all three concerts with huge success, the three musicians enjoyed a day of shopping at Chicago's Magnificent Mile and an informal celebration "Uchi-age" by Mr. and Mrs. Hisaeda at a Chinese restaurant.

Saturday June 26 -- Saori, Kaoru and Mai bid farewell to the United States, taking with them many wonderful memories.

What a wonderful **Midsummer Dream of Japan!** What a beautiful collaboration among Kobe College, Kobe College Corporation - Japan Education Exchange, and the Consul General of Japan at Chicago! As George Hisaeda said at the opening of the concert, let us hope for a third such concert series, bringing friends and music closer yet again.

Thank you everyone.

Your Working Group:

Tak Ishida

Go Sugiura

Natsuko Furuya